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Combining Mixed Embeddedness and Transnationalism: The Utilization of Social Resources among Turkish Migrant Entrepreneurs

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Abstract

The article argues that the mixed embeddedness approach can benefit from a consideration of the discussions concerning migrant transnationalism. The original theorization of mixed embeddedness did not include a transnational perspective, although scholars have later combined the two academic discussions in various ways. This article argues that a transnational perspective is useful in studies of the operation of migrant entrepreneurship, but transnationalism should not be studied at a separate level of analysis. The mixed embeddedness approach can be used to analyze the processes whereby various resources are utilized, but entrepreneurs have to be seen as social actors that may operate at different interconnected scales, including a transnational level. In the article, results from a study of Turkish migrant entrepreneurs in Finland are used to describe how the entrepreneurs act to recruit trusted employees. The analysis of the results requires a consideration of both transnational social networks, including family ties, as well as the opportunity structures of the businesses. The article demonstrates how the utilization of transnational social networks is connected to wider social, political and economic contexts, as suggested by the mixed embeddedness theory. The study of Turkish entrepreneurs in Finland is used to illuminate how a transnational perspective can be successfully combined with a mixed embeddedness approach.

Keywords: transnationalism; globalized networks; mixed embeddedness; migrant entrepreneurs; labour market.

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1 Introduction

The mixed embeddedness approach explains the interdependence of resources and opportunity structures in the dynamics of migrant entrepreneurship (Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Kloosterman, 2010). The approach has been significant in outlining how both resources and the opportunity structures of small businesses are connected to wider social, political and economic environments. However, the original theory of mixed embeddedness did not explicitly take into account the transnational feature of migrant communities. Typically, the social relations of migrants constitute transnational social fields, encompassing both the country of origin and country of settlement. The geographical constraints on social arrangements recede and sometimes the social fields may develop into global diaspora communities. Thus, the resources and opportunity structures of migrant businesses may be transnational rather than geographically bounded. Thus, as outlined in this article, many authors have recently argued for a need to combine the mixed embeddedness approach with a consideration of transnationalism. However, it is not obvious how this combination can be done, and this article will sort out some of the challenges involved.

In this article, a study of Turkish migrant businesses in Finland is used to illuminate how the mixed embeddedness approach can be combined with the theorization on migrant transnationalism. The results of an interview study among Turkish migrant entrepreneurs demonstrates how the operation of migrant businesses is related to both the resources available in transnational social spaces and the opportunity structures of the local context. Furthermore, the study demonstrates how the utilization of social resources always depend on wider social, political and economic environments, as suggested by the mixed embeddedness theory. Social resources is a broad concept, and this article limits its focus on the utilization of human resources, or more precisely the utilization of family ties and networks for the recruitment of skilled and trusted labour. The Turkish migrants in Finland have mainly established small fast food outlets in the restaurant sector, which is a line of business where the role of family ties and networks may be central. Transnational family ties can be understood as a specific transnational social resource, but the question that will be discussed in this article is how and under what circumstances this resource can be utilized in the running of the businesses.

2 Mixed Embeddedness of Migrant Businesses

The mixed embeddedness approach has been widely used in studies of migrant businesses since its introduction mainly by Robert Kloosterman and Jan Rath in the late 1990s (Kloosterman, van der Leun & Rath, 1999; Rath, 2000; Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Kloosterman, 2010). The mixed embeddedness perspective in studies of minority entrepreneurship was developed to take into account how the resources of minority communities are heavily dependent on the social, political and economic environment both within the minority community and in society in general. According to Rath, Solano and Schutjens (2018), the perspective can be seen as an “integrative perspective” that “emphasizes the complex interdependency between structures and agency and tries to combine multiple factors for both supply and demand.” Since previous theories had emphasized the “supply side”, the argument was that the “demand side” should be included more centrally in the analysis (e.g. Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Ram, Jones & Villares-Varela, 2017). The mixed embeddedness perspective can be seen as a development of the perspective on embeddedness presented by Karl Polanyi (1957), who argued that economic activities are constrained by non-economic institutions, as well as the emphasis of the importance of social ties initially presented by Mark Granovetter (e.g. 1985). According to these perspectives on embeddedness, entrepreneurship can only be fully understood with an approach that captures aspects outside the neo-classical domain of supply and demand (Rath, Solano & Schutjens, 2018). In addition, the mixed embeddedness perspective argues that migrant businesses are not only embedded in the social networks of the migrant community, but the way the networks can be utilized is also heavily dependent on the wider social, political and economic environment of the country of settlement, therefore the embeddedness is “mixed” (Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Kloosterman, 2010). The perspective combines a focus on the resources of entrepreneurs with a focus on the opportunity structure they operate in. Kloosterman and Rath (2001) study the opportunity structure at multiple scales and identify three levels of analysis:

the national level, the urban or regional level, and the neighbourhood level. The opportunity structure is also seen as being composed of both an economic context and a political/institutional context, including laws, rules and policies (Kloosterman & Rath, 2001). Thus, the opportunity structure itself has to be problematized and related to a wider institutional framework (Kloosterman, 2010, p. 40). The mixed embeddedness approach has been widely influential and accepted among scholars. Yet, some authors have felt that, although the approach “recognises the importance of different scales, it says little about the interplay of scalar relationships” (Sepulveda, Syrett & Lyon, 2011, p. 474), which as I will argue in the following, has a relevance for an analysis of the transnational scale.

3 The Transnationalism of Migrant Businesses

In migrant communities, there often exist social resources that are embedded in the transnational social fields of the migrants. The seminal book *Nations Unbound* defined transnationalism “as the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders.” (Basch, Glick Schiller & Szanton Blanc, 1994, p. 7). Depending on the scope and permanency of the transnational social fields, these may be regarded as transnational ties, networks or spaces (Faist, Fauser & Reisenauer, 2013). In general, the transnational perspective suggests a research focus not limited by the boundaries of nation-states or by specific localities, since social relations may be completely detached from geographical constraints. Transnationalism describes relations over and beyond the nation states, not between or in them. Thus, a transnational perspective suggests a critical perspective on the “methodological nationalism” endemic to much social scientific research (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002). Furthermore, as the previously mentioned quotation from *Nations Unbound* also indicates, the transnational perspective has often focused on the agency of migrants. The transnational social relations are forged and sustained by migrants as social actors, although this process, of course, is structured by wider power relations (Basch et al., 1994). In other words, transnationalism is constructed as a “transnationalism from below” (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998). The concept of transnationalism easily invites to a perspective focusing on agency and micro-sociological processes, compared to the concept of globalization, which tends to be used for macro-sociological developments. Transnationalism as a research paradigm can therefore also be used to focus on the transnational resources available for migrant integration processes (Mügge, 2016).

In the case of migrant entrepreneurs, a transnational perspective suggests that the resources available to migrant entrepreneurs are not necessarily locally bounded within the framework of the society of settlement. Migrant businesses can often rely heavily on resources available in transnational ties, networks or spaces. The research on entrepreneurship that has used a transnational perspective can, for the sake of simplification, be divided into two different strands of research. Firstly, a growing strand of research constitute studies of *transnational entrepreneurship*, which maps the transnationalism of the economic activities of entrepreneurs, which is often analysed as a specific form of business activity (e.g. Portes, Guarnizo & Haller, 2002; Drori, Honig & Wright, 2009; Patel & Conklin, 2009; Honig, Drori & Carmichael, 2010; Solano, 2016a). Secondly, the other strand of research takes as its starting point the existence of *transnationalism* among migrant communities, and analyses the role (if any) played by transnational social ties and networks among migrant small businesses (e.g. Rusinovic, 2008; Ambrosini, 2012; Katila & Wahlbeck, 2012; Bagwell, 2015). This division into two strands of research is a somewhat artificial distinction, but the first strand of research on transnational entrepreneurship slightly differs from the research on transnationalism, since the latter include not only economic activities, but also cultural, political and social ties and networks that all may play a role for the running of businesses. The analysis in this article has a closer affinity with the second of these strands, since my focus is the utilization of social ties and networks.

Since transnationalism is a feature that to some extent can be found among all migrants, it could easily be expected that transnational entrepreneurship, as a specific form of business activity, is common among migrant entrepreneurs. Yet, research indicates that transnational economic activities are relatively uncommon and often limited to small number of migrant businesses. For example, Alejandro Portes, Luis Guarnizo and William Haller (2002) examined cross-border transnational entrepreneurship among

Dominican, Colombian and Salvadoran migrant communities in the USA. The findings suggested that transnational enterprise was relatively uncommon among the entrepreneurs, and mainly restricted to male, educated and skilled migrants. Trevor Jones, Monder Ram and Nick Theodorakopoulos (2010) studied the dynamics of transnational Somali business activity in Leicester. Their findings supported the argument that transnational entrepreneurship is likely to be the preserve of a small minority, the reason they found was that the political-economic context imposed harsh constraints on the business activity which could not be circumvented by the utilization of transnational links. Maurizio Ambrosini (2012) studied transnational economic activity among migrants in northern Italy. The empirical cases considered were courier services on routes from Milan to Eastern Europe, shops owned by migrants who offer “ethnic” products in Milan and Genoa, and phone centres run by migrants in Turin. The studies confirmed that it is only a few migrants that are involved in transnational economic activities in a strict sense of the term, involving movement across borders as well as maintenance of activities and interests in multiple countries. However, Ambrosini (2012) points out that if the concept of transnational activity is understood in a broader sense, the number of involved migrants increases vastly. Furthermore, many studies point out that transnational entrepreneurship should not be seen in isolation, many entrepreneurs simultaneously operate at various scales and the transnational activities may only be of marginal importance compared to other business activities (e.g. Solano, 2016a; Bagwell, 2018). In conclusion, although transnationalism is a common feature among migrant communities, previous research suggests that it is relatively seldom that migrants are able to utilize transnational networks in business activities.

4 Combining Transnationalism and Mixed Embeddedness Theory

Since only few migrant entrepreneurs are transnational entrepreneurs, the question that needs to be analysed is how and under what circumstances transnational activities are possible among migrants. The mixed embeddedness theory would seem to be able to help in this analysis, since the theory can be regarded as one of the most developed theories of the opportunity structure of migrant businesses. However, the question is to what extent a consideration of transnationalism can be combined with the mixed embeddedness theory, since the theory has identified the opportunity structure at three levels, the national, the regional level and the neighbourhood level, which does not include a transnational or global level of analysis. Not surprisingly, many recent studies of migrant entrepreneurship have pointed out that the perspective of mixed embeddedness needs to be combined with a more profound consideration of transnationalism (e.g. Miera, 2008; Jones et al., 2010; Wahlbeck, 2013; Bagwell, 2015 & 2018).

For example, Frauke Miera (2008) describes how the Polish entrepreneurs in Berlin operate in a transnational social space, consisting of both Germany and Poland. She explicitly suggests that the transnational space can be introduced as a new fourth level of analysis on markets and institutional regulations, as studied by the mixed embeddedness perspective (Miera, 2008, p. 755). Susan Bagwell (2018), in her studies of Vietnamese businesses in London, presents a re-working of the mixed embeddedness thesis to provide an explanation of transnational entrepreneurship. She argues for the need for “a further transnational layer of embeddedness” (Bagwell, 2018, p. 105), which operates at both the macro, meso and micro levels of analysis of the opportunity structures, as outlined by Kloosterman (2010). Thus, the opportunity structure of transnational entrepreneurs is much wider than the host country market and institutional forces generally considered important by the mixed embeddedness thesis. Furthermore, Bagwell (2018) also identifies the development of a complex web of trading relationship that extend beyond the traditional links with the homeland to multiple countries of the Vietnamese diaspora. “Thus, an additional transnational layer of embeddedness needs to be added to the micro, meso and macro levels of analysis proposed by the mixed embeddedness thesis” (Bagwell, 2018, p. 116).

However, it is doubtful if the transnational social space can be studied as a “separate level” (Miera, 2008), or even as an “additional layer” (Bagwell, 2018), of analysis. In contrast to Miera, and more strongly than Bagwell, I would like to emphasize the interconnectedness of the transnational and the other levels of analysis. Markets, and even less so institutional regulations, are seldom solely transnational and can usually not be analysed in isolation from their local environments. Both customers and production facilities tend to be located somewhere, within specific local markets and local social, politi-

cal and economic environments. Furthermore, there are relatively few transnational institutions — with the EU and various UN organisations as the most noteworthy exceptions — that has the power to decide on policies and regulations of relevance for the opportunity structure of migrant businesses. In terms of social relations, transnationalism is not the same thing as a “deterritorialization” of society. Although transnationalism involves border-crossing relations, the social relations are still connected to and rooted in specific localities and national contexts (cf. Smith & Guarnizo, 1998). Transnationalism is about creating connections between people, places and markets across borders. The emerging transnational ties, networks and spaces may be new and of growing significance, but the people, places and markets that have been connected have existed previously.

Thus, my argument is that the mixed embeddedness perspective provides a comprehensive approach that without fundamental changes can be adapted to achieve a better understanding of transnational processes. A detailed discussion of how the mixed embeddedness theory can be combined with a transnational perspective has been presented by Solano (2016a). He finds that the integrative model presented by Chen and Tan (2009) provides some of the best advancement of the theory of transnational entrepreneurship, which also has relevance for mixed embeddedness theory (although Chen and Tan does not explicitly refer to the theory). Chen and Tan underline the need for a theory of migrant entrepreneurship to take into account both the country of destination and the country of origin, i.e. the need for a transnational perspective. Furthermore, the way they do this is with the introduction of the concept of “glocalized networks”, which emphasizes that the social networks simultaneously work at different scales, both local and global. As they point out “Ethnic entrepreneurship is no longer bounded in enclaves, spatially or socially defined [...] The globalized networks perspective helps to advance the understanding of [ethnic entrepreneurship] through taking into account immigrants’ ongoing linkages to the home country or a global diaspora.” (Chen & Tan, 2009, p. 1086; cf. Solano, 2016a, p. 40). Solano (2016a) further explores the opportunity structure of transnational entrepreneurs and clarifies the processes through which opportunities are seized. As he argues, transnational entrepreneurial practices tend to be “multifocal”, which stresses that transnational business can involve more groups than only co-nationals and more countries than only the country of origin and the one of reception (Solano, 2016a & 2016b).

It can be concluded that migrant entrepreneurs create and utilize transnational networks in their business activities, but there is still reason to also consider how these processes are connected to other levels of analysis. The transnational perspective therefore invites to a consideration of both the transnational agency of migrant entrepreneurs and the various structural constraints, operating at different levels, that influence the utilization of transnational networks. A transnational perspective is useful in studies of migrant entrepreneurship, but the perspective may hide the fact that not all transnational social networks and resources necessarily can be utilized by migrants in each social context. The question that needs to be addressed is how and under what circumstances social resources can be mobilized as a resource (cf. Anthias, 2007) and how actors simultaneously operate at different scales to be able to utilize resources. To study migrant entrepreneurship is not only a question of how migrants seize the opportunities available, but there is also a need to include an analysis of the power structures that make it possible for some to seize the opportunity while other do not have the same opportunity. This has especially been pointed out by studies that see migrant entrepreneurs as strategic actors in a Bourdieuan sense, where actors compete for various forms of capital in the fields that they operate in (e.g. Anthias, 2007; Patel & Conklin, 2009; Jones, Ram, Edwards, Kiselinchev, & Muchenje, 2014). Thus, I suggest a research focus on the processes whereby resources are utilized by dynamic social actors, simultaneously operating at different levels of analysis, rather than a focus that isolates the transnational networks into a separate level of analysis.

5 Methods

I will now turn to my study of Turkish migrant entrepreneurs in Finland. This qualitative interview study provides an opportunity to look more closely at how and under what circumstances transnational social resources are, or are not, utilized. Since Turkey and Finland are situated at great distance from each other, the study provides a good opportunity to analyse the importance of globalized social net-

works. The study of Turkish migrant businesses is a long-term research interest of mine, with initial interviews conducted in 2001–2002 and follow-up interviews in 2014. All informants were Turkish-born Turkish citizens. In 2001–2002, interviews were made with 27 self-employed, as well as 11 employees in the Turkish-owned businesses. Previous publications from this study describes the start-up of Turkish-owned businesses in Finland (Katila & Wahlbeck, 2012), as well as the working conditions in kebab shops (Wahlbeck, 2007). The businesses were found in the Finnish Trade Register. During the research process, it turned out that 24 of the 27 self-employed entrepreneurs were active in the restaurant sector and were kebab shop owners. Thus, the study focuses on kebab restaurants, since most of the self-employed Turkish entrepreneurs in Finland are active in the restaurant sector, and most the businesses are small kebab fast-food restaurants. In 2014, additional interviews were made in a follow-up study with the 9 of the self-employed who still were active in the restaurant sector and available for an interview. The study therefore also provides longitudinal information about the development of the Turkish-owned restaurant businesses in Finland over a period of at least twelve years. The area of the study was Southwest Finland and the capital region of Finland (Varsinais-Suomi and Helsinki), which were chosen to include both rural and urban regions in the study.

This article analyses information provided in the interviews in 2001–2002 and in 2014. The interviews were semi-structured interviews. This qualitative interview method provides a possibility to use thematic but relatively broad questions in the interviews (e.g. Bryman, 2016, pp. 465–468). The open-ended questions gave the interviewees a possibility to develop their answers and present their own perspective on the themes discussed in the interviews. Thus, this study was able to map the role played by various types of transnational ties from the perspective of the entrepreneurs themselves. Some of the interviews in 2001–2002 were conducted in Turkish by a Turkish-speaking research assistant, while all interviews in 2014 were done in Finnish by the author. All interviews were transcribed to facilitate the analysis with the help of a computer program for qualitative analysis (*N-Vivo*). The quotations in this article are translated into English by the author.

6 The Transnationalism of Turkish Migrant Businesses in Finland

In general, Turkish migrants and their descendants display various social and economic transnational ties, encompassing not only countries of origin and settlement, but also other countries. The Turkish diaspora is a global diaspora and Turkish transnational entrepreneurship is not surprisingly often characterized by a “multifocality” (Solano, 2016b) and “multi-polar links” (Bagwell, 2018). In this article, I will limit my analysis to the utilization of transnational family ties, as a specific transnational social resource that the entrepreneurs, in various ways, utilize in the running of businesses. These family ties provide a good example of the processes connected to utilization of transnational resources. A large share of the Turkish migrants in Finland have arrived in the country through family migration, mostly involving intermarriages between a Turkish man and a Finnish wife. Although this may provide an access to various Finnish resources, there may not be that many Turkish relatives in Finland, and the entrepreneurs can therefore not rely on strong ties within a Turkish community in Finland. Thus, the importance of transnational ties becomes accentuated. In the case of the informants in this study, transnational family ties connected the entrepreneurs with relatives in both Turkey and in other countries, especially in Germany and Sweden, where migration from Turkey has a long history. In the interviews in 2001–2002, the Turkish entrepreneurs described how they had received help and information from relatives during the start-up phase of the businesses. The first Turkish kebab shops owners in Finland visited friends and relatives in Sweden and Germany to learn the trade and buy the equipment that at this time was not available in Finland. Furthermore, it was common to receive different types of support from relatives in Turkey, and some entrepreneurs had received loans from relatives to start the businesses (Katila & Wahlbeck, 2012). The family ties were often supported by frequent visits from Finland to Turkey and the extensive use of information and communication technology. Frequent social contacts support the maintenance of social networks that become “glocalized social networks” (Chen & Tan, 2009), embedded in the social contexts encompassing not only countries of origin and settlement, but also other countries. Consequently, the transnational family ties have been extensive and have played a role in the sharing of information, know-how and economic resources that have been utilized during the start-

up phase of the businesses. Transnational family ties can offer a supply of both human resources and economic resources instrumental in the starting of businesses. For example, in an interview in a rural municipality in 2001, the entrepreneur outlined how he had been able to start the only kebab shop in the municipality:

ÖW: Where did you get help to start the business?

R: I own this kebab shop together with two of my cousins. We did get help and advice from both friends and from my family to start this shop. Of course, we do help each other. When you start a business, the most important thing you need is personal contacts [...].

ÖW: What are your future plans for the business:

R: Actually, we plan to sell this business, because we have not been able to hire skilled employees. Furthermore, the work is demanding and we work long hours. (Interview n° 11)

The answers provided in the quotation above was typical for the interviews in 2001–2002. Most of the Turkish-owned businesses were small kebab fast food shops without any regular employees. In my follow-up study in 2014, there was a larger diversity among the remaining Turkish-owned business, while a majority had closed down, some had succeeded, relocated and expanded, and a few remained struggling as small businesses. The male owner of the shops mostly runs the small businesses, with the occasional help of male friends or Turkish relatives. The entrepreneurs tend to work long hours, but in case the business was successful, a further expansion of the businesses demands a recruitment of labour. To expand a restaurant business requires flexible and reliable employees that accept to work under the difficult working conditions in the kebab shop, including irregular hours during weekends and late nights. Thus, the recruitment of trusted and flexible employees was a priority for the entrepreneurs. In practice, there was a wish for a flexibility concerning working hours and salary payments, which made it demanding to find the right employees (cf. Wahlbeck, 2007). In both the interviews conducted in 2001–2002 and in 2014, most kebab entrepreneurs indicated that they would like to employ relatives in order to get reliable employees. However, the entrepreneurs did not find enough suitable relatives in Finland or in other parts of Europe to meet the demand for labour. Many male entrepreneurs have Finnish spouses, and they may play some role in the economy of the businesses, but it is still rare to find a Finnish employee behind the counter in the Turkish-owned kebab shops. In general, a kebab shop is not considered an attractive work place among anybody who can find another employment in Finland. In this situation, the entrepreneurs in Finland often tried to recruit relatives in Turkey to be employed in the kebab shops. Many informants explained that they had connections to relatives in Turkey who could be trusted and would provide the necessary flexibility and skills needed in the shops. The transnational family ties between countries of origin and country of settlement could provide a supply of reliable employees, which would meet a clear demand, since reliable employees constitute a key resource for the survival and expansion of the small businesses. The entrepreneurs are also embedded in the “glocalized social networks” (Chen & Tan, 2009) that would make a utilization of the resource possible.

7 The Role of the Wider Institutional Framework

The utilization of the above mentioned family ties have, however, been largely prevented by the wider institutional framework of the country of settlement. The Turkish entrepreneurs have not been able to utilize their transnational networks to recruit people from Turkey because Finnish authorities have not provided residence permits for these employees. In other words, the existing Finnish laws and rules regulating immigration and employment have made it impossible for the supply and demand to meet. The main reason for this is the official regulation that available jobs must be offered to registered unemployed persons in the Finnish labour market. The decisions of the Finnish Immigration Service are based on the labour and migration laws as well as guidelines issued by national and regional authorities. According to the Finnish Aliens Act (1218/2013, 73§) residence permits for employment requires that there is no labour suitable for the work available in the labour market (including the whole EU/EEA-area) within a reasonable time, and the authorities also need to ensure that the applicant’s means of

support are secured. Because unemployed workers are available in large numbers in Finland, it is not possible to get a work permit for a person living in Turkey. The entrepreneurs are expected to recruit the needed workers among the available workers in Finland, regardless of the specific demands of the kebab businesses. Actually, the possibility to receive a residence permit for a work in the restaurant sector also seems to be based on some evaluation made by the Finnish authorities of the skills demanded for the work. For example, in a comparison of Turkish-owned and Chinese-owned restaurant businesses, it turned out that work and residence permits had been given for kitchen staff in Chinese restaurants, while permits seemed to be impossible to get for a job in a kebab restaurant (Katila & Wahlbeck, 2012). Thus, the Finnish authorities seem to hold diverging cultural perceptions of the work in the restaurant business, depending on the nationality of the entrepreneur, which also influence the decisions of the authorities. Many entrepreneurs complained about the policy of the Finnish authorities, both in the interviews in 2001–2002 and in 2014. An entrepreneur explained in 2014:

I think I would have needed more help from employees in the kebab shop. I tried to employ a relative from Turkey, but despite my need for help it turned out to be impossible to get a work permit. The Finnish authorities say that it is impossible according to their rules. This is something I think should work in a different way. (Interview n° 7)

The above-mentioned laws and regulations provide a concrete example of an institutional framework that influences the possibility to utilize the resources available in transnational ties. In other words, as the mixed embeddedness theory argues (Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Kloosterman, 2010), it is important to take into account the wider institutional framework to understand and explain how the migrant businesses operate. Among the entrepreneurs, the choice of employees is decisively influenced not only by the Finnish opportunity structure, but by the institutional framework of this structure (i.e. the legal context and official regulations involved). As a consequence, the entrepreneurs have relatively seldom been able to expand the business or to move into other lines of business, since this would require a need for skilled and expensive labour, which the entrepreneurs cannot afford. The entrepreneurs are therefore often stuck in the fast food restaurant business sector, where they can run the business themselves by working long hours. The mixed embeddedness approach provides a framework to understand the developments described above. The Finnish migration laws and regulations constitute an institutional framework that influences the opportunity structure of the migrant businesses and hampers the utilization of transnational social resources.

8 The Entrepreneurs as Social Actors

The interesting thing is, however, to look at how the entrepreneurs try to overcome the obstacles created by the institutional framework. This turns the attention to the agency of the entrepreneurs and how they are able to utilize transnational resources despite various obstacles. The analysis needs to take into account both individual agency and the processes and structures involved when social actors compete for resources (i.e. various forms of capital) in a specific field of action (Patel & Conklin, 2009; Jones et al., 2014; Cederberg & Villares-Varela, 2019). The Turkish migrant entrepreneurs in my study are in many ways disadvantaged in the economic field in Finland, they experience a lack of many of the resources that the majority population may have access to, including human, cultural and economic capital. Yet, the social capital, and especially transnational social capital, may constitute a key resource that migrants have access to. An entrepreneur who had been relatively successful in his restaurant business told me the following in 2014:

ÖW: Looking back at the history of your businesses, is there anything you would have done differently?

R: It is difficult to say. Looking back at the first kebab shop, at the time when I started, I think I worked very hard. In the beginning it was very demanding and I did everything myself. I visited friends in Germany who had kebab shops, to see how they were working and they had plenty of employees. But here in Finland I had to work very hard to succeed.

[...] I had borrowed some money from Turkish friends and I was working long hours to pay it back. It took some time to get customers and I had problems with my employees. It was difficult to find good employees. However, I had some useful contacts and in the end the business was running with some reliable friends as employees. (Interview n° 22)

As outlined above, the challenge facing the entrepreneurs is to find skilled and reliable employee in a situation where these cannot be imported from abroad. This study, which has followed some of the entrepreneurs over a long period of time, suggest that some (although only a minority) of the entrepreneurs have been successful in their business and have been able to expand. Did transnational networks play any role for the successful entrepreneurs to find, firstly, the necessary skills and, secondly, reliable employees? In the case of skills, the study indicates that some entrepreneurs were able to utilize their transnational networks to get an opportunity to learn useful skills. Since skilled employees could not be imported, the entrepreneurs instead travelled abroad themselves. Paradoxically, the Finnish restrictions on immigration can be seen to have strengthened the transnationalism of the entrepreneurs, since the entrepreneurs themselves did more frequent visits abroad. Thus, the entrepreneurs flexibly tried to overcome the business challenges created by the immigration restrictions in the country of settlement. In this situation, the family networks of the entrepreneurs provided an important channel whereby new skills and ideas could be learnt during visits abroad. For example, informants told me about visits to businesses and production facilities run by relatives in Turkey, which the entrepreneurs easily could visits during holidays in Turkey. Furthermore, visits to relatives living in other parts of Europe were also used to learn new skills and get familiar with new business-related innovations. Travel within the EU and between the EU and Turkey is relatively easy for the entrepreneurs since they have a Turkish passport and a permanent residence permit in the EU member state Finland. For example, one of the most successful entrepreneurs in this study also seemed to have some of the most elaborate transnational social networks at his disposal. He had spent his youth in Germany where he had his first job in a Turkish restaurant, and he still had friends and relatives living in the country. After this he had worked in small businesses in Turkey owned by his family, before moving to Finland together with his Finnish spouse. The interviewee made occasional business-related visits to Turkey and the interview revealed extensive “glocalised social networks” that the entrepreneur flexibly utilized in the running of businesses:

ÖW: Is your present business involved in economic cooperation with other Turkish-owned businesses?

R: Yes, from time to time. They are situated both near and far. I would say that most of my cooperation is within 150 km from [the location of the restaurant]. In this area I know a lot of businesses and Turkish people [...]. There are some businesses in Turkey that I have some cooperation with when there is a need for it. It is up to me to decide. Of course, they continuously want to offer their services to me, but I only get involved in cooperation from time to time when there is a need for it. (Interview n° 26)

As this quotation reveals, the entrepreneurs may have access to social networks that are diverse and multifocal. However, as emphasised by the interviewee, he is not bound to use only one social network, instead he can flexibly choose between local, regional or transnational networks for the purpose of economic cooperation. Thus, the diverse social networks have provided the successful entrepreneurs with the skills and goods needed in the running of businesses.

A more demanding challenge for the entrepreneurs is to find reliable employees for work in Finland, in a situation where these cannot be recruited from abroad. To solve this problem the entrepreneurs have turned to the local Finnish labour market to look for employees that the entrepreneurs can trust. In this context, newly arrived young male migrants, especially asylum seekers, constitute a supply of cheap labour for the entrepreneurs in the restaurant sector. Recently arrived migrants are often the only type of employees that the entrepreneurs can afford to employ. The employed migrants and asylum seekers are not necessarily relatives, or even from Turkey, but all recently arrived migrants are regarded by the entrepreneurs as a more flexible, and therefore more reliable work force than Finnish employees. Recently arrived migrants and asylum seekers are in a vulnerable situation without knowledge of the

labour market and labour legislation, they are ready to work for a small salary under difficult working conditions, and can as trusted workers be flexibly employed, or even exploited, by the entrepreneurs (cf. Wahlbeck, 2007; Bloch & McKay, 2016). Asylum seekers have a temporary legal position and their right to work is restricted in Finland. The precarious labour market position of these employees is a direct consequence of Finnish migration and labour laws. Previously, asylum seekers in Finland did not have an official right to work, but a change in the law in 2004 gave them the right after three months of stay in the country. Although the asylum seekers are (potentially transnational) migrants, the labour market they are situated in, is in practice strictly a local Finnish labour market. The legal status as an asylum seeker in Finland also formally prevents work abroad and makes transnational travel very difficult. Yet, these asylum seekers, as migrants, provide a future potential for transnational connections that may be realized when and if the person receives a residence permit in Finland. During an interview in 2014, an entrepreneur explained how he had recruited employees in the following way:

ÖW: Can you tell me about how you have recruited your employees?

R: Well, usually they have found me. They know somebody who has worked here before and they get the information about the business. After that they call me or come around and ask for a job. There are many immigrants looking for a job. Some people who have worked here have friends from other countries and some have met while they were at the [local] reception centre [for asylum seekers]. When immigrants start to realise what the real job situation is like in Finland, they also start to be interested in a job in the kebab sector. This is when they contact me. If they have good references, I can consider offering them a job. (Interview n° 19)

The interviews in this study were conducted before the European refugee crisis starting in 2015, but the results clearly indicate that the arrival of large numbers of asylum seekers may have a profound influence on the previously existing migrant businesses. Not surprisingly, the arrival of a large pool of potential employees on the labour market will change the opportunity structure of many businesses. To sum up, the Finnish regulations and policies on migration has in many ways a direct influence not only on the possibility to utilize transnational resources, but also on the emergence and availability of these resources, which further underlines the need to take into account the interconnectedness of the transnational, the national, the urban or regional, and the neighbourhood levels of analysis. The entrepreneurs, as social actors, operate simultaneously at different interconnected scales and therefore the transnational level cannot be studied in isolation.

9 Conclusion

Transnationalism has to be understood as an intrinsic, but varying, feature of migrant communities. The question is, however, why transnational resources are utilized only to a limited degree by migrant entrepreneurs. This article argues that the mixed embeddedness approach is helpful in the search for an answer to this question. As the mixed embeddedness theory suggests migrant businesses are always connected to specific opportunity structures, which in turn are related to wider institutional frameworks (e.g. Kloosterman, 2010). This study has showed that Finnish laws and regulations of immigration and work permits constitute significant institutional frameworks in the sense suggested by the mixed embeddedness perspective. The entrepreneurs display a transnational agency, which would fit the economic opportunity structure of the kebab businesses in Finland, but this agency is in fact obstructed by the institutional framework.

The article argues that the mixed embeddedness approach can be combined with discussions concerning migrant transnationalism. As previous research on migrant entrepreneurship has indicated, a transnational perspective is useful in studies of the operation of migrant businesses. Yet, the theory of transnationalism might overlook the fact that not all transnational social networks necessarily can be utilized by migrants in each social context. There is a need to analyze the opportunity structure that the businesses are embedded in, which will reveal to what extent social networks can be utilized. The insights from classical mixed embeddedness theory are useful in this analysis, since the theory considers the

embeddedness of migrant businesses at various levels of analysis and the transnational level can be added to the analysis. Yet, the argument of this article has been that, from the perspective of mixed embeddedness theory, it is useful to avoid studying transnationalism at a *separate* level of analysis. A transnational perspective needs to be interconnected with all levels of analysis, including the macro, meso and micro level of analysis as outlined by the mixed embeddedness theory.

Entrepreneurs need be understood as social actors that navigate the opportunity structures to constantly try make the best of the available resources. The social networks that migrants are part of may simultaneously exist at several different scales and the networks therefore can be understood as “glocalized networks” (Chen & Tan, 2009). The mixed embeddedness theory conceptualizes the interdependency between structures and agency in the case of the entrepreneurs, thus it helps us to conceptualize the actual process of utilization of resources. Yet, the processual character of the agency of migrants may need to be highlighted more than has been the case in the theory, to understand how migrant entrepreneurs simultaneously operate at different levels of analysis. The dynamic agency of the entrepreneurs has to be taken into account. The results of my study of Turkish entrepreneurs support previous research that highlight how transnational entrepreneurship has to be seen as both dynamic and multifocal (Solano, 2016b; Bagwell, 2018). As my study indicates, the Turkish migrants have tried and partly succeeded in overcoming the obstacles created by the wider institutional framework. Migrant entrepreneurs can, as social actors, simultaneously and flexible operate in various local, national and transnational environments. My argument is therefore that transnational entrepreneurship should not be studied at a separate level of analysis in isolation from other levels of analysis, and in this context the mixed embeddedness approach and the transnational perspective can enrich each other and be successfully combined.

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